

*Indexed*

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Subject: The Law of Benevolence.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# THE LAW OF BENEVOLENCE.

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“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—GAL. vi., 10.

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THIS is only a special application of the great law of benevolence as it was interpreted by the Master, and which he represented to be the center and substance of religion, its animating spirit, as developed under the auspices of the old dispensation, and certainly the inspiring element of religion as to be developed still further under the auspices of his own spiritual kingdom. *Do good to all men*—that is the comprehensive law.

1. This *doing good* is an exceedingly wide thing. It may be, and in its highest form it is, conferring spiritual good,—so addressing yourself to men that they become wiser, purer, more just, more truly inspired with the whole spirit of Christian love and kindness. We are to lose no proper opportunity to inspire men with religious growth, distinctively so called.

But it includes, also, all other forms of doing good. It includes all activity in the direction of material assistance. We are to do good to all men in their political relations as members of the State. We are to do good by public spirit, which is only another inflection of the general feeling of benevolence as applied to the welfare of the community. We are to seek to do good to all men in these various ways.

As men are largely dependent for their culture upon that abundance out of which grows leisure for higher inspirations, so doing good to men in this general formula includes all benefits conferred of a commercial and business-like character. And all material assistance, whether it be helpfulness, whether it be advice, whether it be the actual lending of your strength, your time, or your means, is likewise included.

But there is even a wider sphere of doing good than this. It is, in its most comprehensive form, such a carriage of your whole life and disposition and nature as shall make men feel happier and bet-



ter wherever you go. A man is himself a university of influences. He has his reason, his religious side, his social nature, his economic element, his whole material and physical organization; and the command is to so carry one's whole self throughout, that the influence of a man's living, and of his whole presence shall be to confer happiness, prosperity and joy upon men—not only to make them better, but to make them *feel* better. As it is specified in another place, we are to *please men to edification*—that is, to build them up. We are to please them in such things as will make them better.

This does not exclude pain-giving. It is not to be that kind of goodness which deals only with lenity and with gentleness; because goodness sometimes requires sternness and justice, and even the infliction of suffering. But it is never vengeful. It is never to be giving pain for the sake of giving pain. It is to be a ministration of love, such as a man has at the hand of a surgeon, a physician, a teacher, a parent. The malign disposition, which is one that loves pain for the sake of pain, is never to be a part of Christian nurture or Christian ethics; but whatever men do, in the whole round of their life, is to be done for the sake of making men better and happier around about them.

2. We are to do this, the Apostle says, *as we have opportunity*—which would seem to be a caution against partitioning off a man's time officially, and giving certain days to doing good, and all the rest of the time to doing what you have a mind to. There are men who feel the obligation of doing good on Sunday; there are those who, though they do not think, in their business relations or in their official relations that they are particularly bound to do good any further than to keep within the limits of custom and law, yet feel that when certain days come round—Christmas-days, and Thanksgiving-days, and various festal days—they are bound to do good. They feel that on such days as these, when a decent public sentiment requires that everybody should be happy and should exchange tokens of happiness, they must do something. But the apostle says, as it were, "Not only then, but always; whenever you have a chance; in season and out of season." That is to say, we are to do good at regular periods and in regular methods, not only, but in irregular methods and at irregular periods. We are to do good at unexpected times. Whenever there is an opportunity—that is the time for a man to do good to his fellow-men.

Sometimes men are to make opportunities; but if one be possessed of a right sensibility, and of a true benevolence, opportunities will be suggested by that sensibility; and his desire to do good will break out in such ways as to find a thousand opportunities

which the mere cold waiter and watcher never finds. Only a full heart can always be ready to fill up these fugitive opportunities. For if one be happy himself only when some unexpected stroke of good luck has come to him, it is but occasionally that he is in a condition to make others happy. If, when you are joyous by reason of some fortunate occurrence connected with yourself, you go forth into the street, how many more words you feel disposed to say, how many more kind things you feel disposed to do, how many more opportunities for doing good present themselves to you, than is ordinarily the case! If a man is at peace with himself, and full of gladness, how many opportunities he finds for doing good! whereas, if there come the cold wind of trouble upon him, and he be shut up in the chilling consciousness of his own loss or want, how little he sees of good that he is impelled to do! How few chances come to his notice for the exercise of benevolence! How few people he meets that he wants to speak to! How seldom it is that his desire to do good is awakened!

Opportunities, in other words, may sometimes be said to be but the opening of the gates of a man's own benevolence. He always has opportunities enough who has fullness of sympathy enough; who has the spirit of brotherhood large enough; who has a true love of making happiness.

*As we have opportunity* is not simply, then, the antithesis of official doing good, or doing good at stated seasons. It indicates that we are to make doing good the very atmosphere and business of our whole religious life. There are opportunities which come but once in a man's life-time. Others come; they are thick; but there are things which a man can do once, and never can do again. In the Spring the furrow lies open, and the farmer puts in his seed; but if that season goes by and he does not put in his seed, the opportunity is lost. And so, many furrows are opened in which men may sow seed once in their lifetime, which seed, if it be sown, shall spring up and be most beautiful in blossom and fruit; but if they neglect to put seed in those open furrows, the opportunity will not come to them again so long as they live. Other furrows will open, and they will have certain chances for doing good; but that chance will never present itself again. And so there must be an alertness and enterprise and watchfulness, and above all a fullness of benevolent disposition, that shall always be pressing and pressing to find opportunities, and to develop itself.

3. We are to do good to *all*.

"As we have opportunity let us do good to all men."

The Saviour says:



"If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"

All the world has been accustomed to teach that men should do good to their own household. He that neglects his own household is an infidel. In almost all nations, in nations of almost all shades of development—even those that are quite low down in the scale, toward barbarism—there is an impulse to do good to those next to them. And not only are we to do good to our own selves, but we are to do good to those that are within our own households. Frequently benevolence does not act in the household at all. Affection acts there; and if that be small, or extinguished, there is little or nothing else that can supply its place. And so, many a household is without either affection or benevolence. The love-principle there is too small for a generic, and is famine-stricken in the specific. Hence, there are many households which are simply arenas of petty strife. Oftentimes there is no place more malignant, more bitter, more provocative of that which is bad. Oftentimes there is no place so little like the gate of heaven, and so much like the gate of hell.

We are to do good to all men; and, naturally, doing good begins in the household. Every right-minded man, every true man, should exert all his power to make that place where he dwells a bright, central point, glowing with kindly feeling, with real enjoyment, with inspiration and with happiness. The man that does not make those who live in his own house with him happy, has great reason to suspect, I will not say his Christianity, but his manhood. He may plead that he is an invalid, but that plea, while it extenuates, does not excuse. A man should see to it that where he is, there always is most enjoyment. Begin at home; and do not stop at home.

We are not to confine the doing of good to our own household, nor to our own neighborhood, nor even to our own nation. We have a very kindly feeling toward all those that are of our sort. We are very benevolent toward those that are born with us—that are of the same state, or of the same nation. We are, however, a nation that is overrun with persons who were born abroad; and we very naturally tend to cherish the race prejudices. Foreigners, emigrants, the Irish, the Germans, the Africans—we naturally feel that there is a great distinction between them and us. We acknowledge, to be sure, that there should be humanity in our treatment of them: but there is a seam in the garment of our charity; there is a strong welt that runs across it; we feel that we are bound by bands that run closer, and we respond more generously toward those that are of own blood and lineage. But if there was any one

thing that characterized the Gospel, it was that it was universal; that it made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, between bond and free, between high and low. Christ died for the world; and the spirit of benevolence is to be commensurate with the spirit of the Master who gave himself for all.

Nor are we to confine the doing of good even so narrowly as this. We must see to it that we do not have the feeling of brotherhood merely with regard to nationality. We must not allow race-stock to come in. It is very hard to get over this, especially in California, where a man thinks that he is bound to have a brotherly feeling toward everybody that is not Chinese. We feel bound to have brotherly feelings toward those that speak the same language that we do; toward those that believe in the same religion; toward those that are brought up with the same political ideas; but toward outcasts, the imported heathen that come from Oriental or tropical lands, and that are thrown in among us without being grafted on to us—toward these we have almost any other feeling than that of brotherhood. It is very hard to feel brotherhood toward a man that is worshiping an idol, and that wears his hair in a queue, and that has almond-shaped eyes, and a complexion ranging from copper to black. It is hard to call ourselves brothers of men that bear distasteful lineaments and features. Nevertheless that is the mission and message of true Christianity.

“As we have opportunity let us do good to all men.”

It does not mean, necessarily, that I am to choose my companions, or to make my intimates of all classes of men. I am not bound to form my intimacies on any principle but that of likeness or agreeable differences. I am at liberty to select for my household, or for my private companionship, those that are congenial to me. But the great race of mankind, without distinction, are to be to me in such a sense brothers as that they shall have the warmest sympathy and the greatest helpfulness that I have the opportunity to confer upon them. Love, not prejudice—it is that which should interpret duty to all men, of every nation, and of every race-stock. A universal brotherhood is to be established. All mankind are to be regarded as objects of the divine beneficence; and therefore all our sympathy should go out toward all for whom the cross was raised; toward all for whom God thinks; toward all upon whom he sends his sun and the seasons. All that he calls children we are to call brethren. And we are not to allow our benevolence to be ribbed with prejudice and to be compressed in narrow channels flowing only here and there in exiguous streams. We are to have a large heart, and a large benevolence in it; and we are to let that flow



out toward every human being that has the capacity to enjoy or to suffer.

4. We are to do good as we have opportunity, *especially to ward those that are of the household of faith.* At that time those that drew themselves out from the religion of their fathers, and were brought into the communion of Christian brotherhood, either became poor, or came to such a condition that they shut themselves off from the sympathy of their connections. It is still so in many countries where, under the influence of Christian missions, churches are formed; where the principle of caste exists; where to receive Christ is to give up everything that is dear. And in the olden time, when men became Christians it was an argument for stinginess towards them, and selfishness, and hatred, and persecution; and the open hand was shut up, and the flowing store ceased. Therefore it was that those who came into the Christian church had special need of supporting assistance. That was the reason why the apostle said, *Let us do good, especially unto those who are of the household of faith.*

Every one, entering a church, has a right to feel that he is going into a higher atmosphere than that in which he has been accustomed to move. Every one has a right to feel that when he goes into the church of Christ he goes into an association, a brotherhood, where the principle of gentleness and kindness is carried to a higher degree than it is outside of the church. I know that it is not so. I know that the church is keyed, often, very low in the matter of sympathy. I know that formality, and separations into classes, and divisions by a great many worldly distinctions, break up the sense of brotherhood. I know that too frequently persons who go into the church are like those who go at night to a hotel. Each lodger has his own room, and calls for what he himself needs, and does not feel bound to take care of any of the other lodgers. And a church, frequently, is nothing but a spiritual boarding-house, where the members are not acquainted with each other, and where there is but very little sympathy.

Now, every church should be under the inspiration of such large sympathy and benevolence as to make every one of its members the object of kindly thought and feeling. There should be a public sentiment and an atmosphere of brotherhood in every church. There is no objection in a church to individuality. We do not undertake to break up all these natural and most harmless separations or classifications which socially exist outside of the church. I hold that class, if it be heathen, is devilish, but that it does not need to be heathen. I hold that a man may belong to a class, in the church, or



out of the church, and yet be as full of sympathy, yea, more sympathetic, than he otherwise would be—so much so that he feels an obligation of beneficence toward those that are less favored. But no church is a church of the Lord Jesus Christ in which there is such an introduction of the separations of the world—those which pride courts, and those which vanity foment; in which there is such a spirit of seclusion or separateness that persons coming into it are chilled, and feel desolate and without companionship. It is impossible, perhaps, in a church, for each member to know every other member; but there is such a thing as a public sentiment, there is such a thing as an atmosphere, in a church. And it is this atmosphere, or public sentiment, pervading the whole membership of a church, that is, or will be, more influential in promoting the work of religion, than any ability in eloquence, or any art in beauty. I do not object to architecture. I do not object to music, so that it does not forsake the true mission of music, which is to express deep religious feeling. I do not object to any expression of art in feeling; for art without feeling is a sham; and feeling without art may be vulgar. The highest mission of art is to express the deepest feeling in the fittest way. I do not object to art in architecture and in decoration, so that it is in harmony with right feeling. You may paint your windows and fresco your walls, or not, as you please. It is not particularly essential either way. Art does no harm unless it leads persons to fall more easily into the idolatry of the external. That is to be watched against. But the thing which, above all others, is essential, is that there shall be a sympathy and genuine feeling of brotherhood in a church. More than windows, more than ceiling, more than architecture, more than music, more than the pulpit itself, in attraction, should be the genial atmosphere of the whole society and of the whole brotherhood. That is what men *feel*, even when they cannot tell what it is that affects them. That is what makes men, frequently, desire to go to certain congregations, even when the reason why is beyond the explanation of their reason.

In this congregation, although we are far from being perfect, although there is much room for us to grow yet, I think there is a hospitable feeling. I think there is here, to a great degree, a genial feeling. And I think that one of the secrets of the attractiveness of this church is not so much this or that or the other influence in its ministrations, as its spirit of brotherhood and sympathy and generosity and kindness, which in the main exists, and which constitutes a feature of the atmosphere of the whole society.

If the church on earth were full of happiness-makers, there would be no need of further argument for religion. Religion in its love-

form is the best argument for itself. No man wishes to deny it. No man can doubt a fact that exists continually before him. There would not need to be any argument to prove that an orchard was beautiful when its trees were full of fruit. There would be no need of an argument to prove that a vine was fragrant in May, or that it was fruitful in October. No one with a cluster of grapes in his hands needs to be persuaded that the fruit is luscious. The thing itself is its own expounder and interpreter. "By their fruit ye shall know them"—blossom and fruit and all.

Cold and dead churches, churches that are receptacles only as sepulchers are; churches whose members rattle in them almost as the dry bones do in the coffins of the charnel-house—those are arguments of infidelity; and no argument to prove Christianity can be of much validity where the church is hard, or cold, or dead. And no matter how philosophical, and skeptical even, a man may be, if the church clothes all its members with the true spirit of love, and they are full to overflowing with kindness, and the whole church is developed in the majesty and power of omnipotent and omnipresent love, that disarms all criticism, and takes away all possibility of doubt. No man ever yet needed an argument to prove that light was light, and that it was agreeable. *Ye are the light of the world.* No man needs an argument to prove that fruit is good. *Ye are vines. Ye bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father.*

We are, then, to do good to all men—especially to those that are of the household of faith. We are to see to it that the spirit of sympathy and benevolence makes the church the brightest place on earth, where many different kinds of people are connected together.

But then, this passage has been interpreted for exactly the opposite thing. Not only has it been taught that we ought to take care of our own members, but it has been extensively taught that we ought to patronize them. I have no objection to persons patronizing those that are in the same church with them, provided all other things are fittest; but that a Methodist should trade with nobody but a Methodist, and vote for nobody but a Methodist; that a Presbyterian should go out of his way to favor those that belong to his communion, and pass by those that belong to other communions; that the exhibition of all political and economic sympathy should be limited by the lines of sectarianism; that a Congregational church should undertake to bestow its sympathy only where there is Congregational orthodoxy—that is abhorrent to the very spirit of charity. It is a perversion, in express terms almost, of the injunction of our text:

"Let us do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith."



Who are *the household of faith*? All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. They may be of the Baptist, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian, the Roman Catholic, or any other Christian Church. If men love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, whatever sect they may belong to, they come within the sweep of this command. Do good to them all. Be genial, sympathetic, confiding, benevolent, helpful, in every way. Do not let the outflow of sympathy from your heart be perverted, nor take on the shackles of a technical orthodoxy. There is no man on earth that you can afford to treat otherwise than kindly. Kindness is fitted to everybody. It should be active and diffusive; and yet it should be so concentrated that everybody shall feel it. Your kindness should be such that when a person comes into your presence he shall feel that you have a real interest in his welfare. It should be such that when you meet persons they shall be made happier, and feel that they are of more importance in the world than they ever thought they were before.

With this general exposition, I pass to make some special applications of it.

First, we see what must be added to the popular notion of religion. I would not have religion understood as conveying less of the idea of moral strictness than it now does. It should carry in it the popular notion of forsaking all sin, and clothing one's self with all virtue. And all the customs by which the experience of the race throughout ages has established the distinction between right and wrong, should be preserved—certainly by those who belong to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor would I have religion understood as conveying the idea of less correct beliefs. I would not have belief despotic. I would not have orthodoxy severe and unrelenting. Yet the distinction between truth and error should be preserved. Carelessness as to what a man believes can never be wholesome. The desire of knowing, and of knowing accurately and truly, is a noble desire, alike in the school of philosophy and in the school of religion. I would have churches, therefore, teach distinctly what men believe. Every church must have a creed. If it is held together, it must be held together by something in common. And whatever that is which holds it together in common, is its creed, whether it be written or unexpressed. And all those great influential lines of belief by which the church separates itself from the world, I would have it impress upon all that are under its influence.

I would not have less systematic benevolence carried on. There are many things in the work of benevolence which can be abbrevi-

ated, economized, made more searching and more thorough by classification and division of labor; and therefore there ought to be not less, but if anything more, systematic benevolence in the church. But while these things are maintained—morality and systematic organization—by the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in common, there ought to be more social sympathy and kindness among its members.

This is the spirit which, if it be comparatively speaking low down, is on that very account naturally interpreted in favor of religion. It is just that which meets the wants of most men.

A man with whom the world has gone wrong; in whose house has been death; in whose business has been bankruptcy; who has fallen, it may be, from companionship here and there; who is struggling with accumulated misfortunes; who is despondent; and who right in the years of mid-life wishes that it were already sundown, wanders (as one within the sound of my voice very well remembers) into the street seeking the waves; he hears singing; his attention is arrested by the hymn; he is lifted up, as it were, by it through the air. Scarcely knowing what he does, he follows the sound; and he is met at the door of the church,—not imperiously, not irritably, not with a Martinet insistence upon minute particulars, but kindly. He is not shoved hither and thither; but a kind hand is laid on his shoulder, and a gentle voice says to him, "Wait. Do not go away. As quick as I can I will wait on you. Step in." That familiar kindness is strange to his ear; and the hymn still goes on; and he is drawn within the house. The man that shows him this courtesy and kindness does not know that he is saving a soul from death. He takes him to a vacant seat far up toward the pulpit. There is a warmth of genialness in the congregation. And when the service has been gone through with, the truth has been poured into an open heart. One that needed consolation has received it; and all thought of suicide has flown away, with the feeling that inspired it. He now turns about wistfully for sympathy. Is there any one in the house that will show him kindness? One greets him, a stranger though he be, and says, "Come again; we shall be glad to see you here." It was not much to say, but it has saved a heart from despair. It has opened a new avenue of love, and given birth to the feeling, "There are those that care for my soul." He goes again at night. And he goes from Sunday to Sunday. He goes month after month. And by and by, through the grace of God, he stands the object of saving mercy through fidelity and support.

I tell you, while the truth preached does much good, the kind hearts of the men who are listening to the preaching, the real spirit



of brotherhood that draws them near to you—near to your person; near to your tongue; near to your heart; those love-greetings by which men are made to feel that they have come to a place where a man is thought of without regard to external trappings—these break down all opposition, and preach the Gospel. And often there is much more Gospel preached at the door-end of the church than at the pulpit-end. They that do not look for the gloved hand; they that do not judge by the apparel; they that see in the face of a man the marks of care and trouble, and perceive that he needs sympathy and kindness—they are bearing to him a Gospel which he will understand better than any exposition or any doctrinal discussion. And that kind of preaching which we need is the preaching of the great heart of the congregation in brotherly sympathy to all that need succor.

Men may spread the Gospel, and prepare the way for religion by carrying to men an active sympathy—a brotherly principle. But there is discretion to be used in preaching to men on the subject of religion. When persons first come to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are often exhorted to work for the salvation of others. It is said to them, “Now that you have become a Christian you must do good.” Instantly they begin to think, “What shall I do?” And one person says to them, “Why do you not take a district and distribute tracts?” Another person says, “Do you join a Sunday-School and teach a class.”

I am not mentioning these things to ridicule them. Often they are just the things which persons are benefited by undertaking; and often they are just the things by which they can do the most good. But I ridicule the idea that these few methods by which we reach people are all the resources that we have of doing good. One says, “Do you mean that I shall ask a man how his soul does?” No, I do not. You, little beardless young fellow, have a start in life; and the first man you meet is a man of perhaps ten times your stature every way; and you go and talk to him, saying, “How is your soul, sir?” I do not mean any such thing as that. If the man were sick, if he were wounded unto death on the battle-field, a child might speak to him without abashment, because time presses; because his life is oozing away; because now, if ever, he must hear the central truth of religion. But in nine cases out of ten you must be a John Baptist preparing the way of the Lord to men.

Now, when you are converted, if those that are accustomed to work with you in the shop, or to be with you in the store, are unconverted, and you instantly go back to them with your catechism and your confession of faith, they will laugh at you, and say, “Ah!

a new broom sweeps clean. You have got into the church, and you think that you must walk straight." And you set them against you. But if you are kind to them; if you take upon yourself services that otherwise would fall upon them; if you serve them for love's sake; if you are more discreet, and in talking you avoid topics that are disagreeable to them; if you are willing to work later to give them a longer evening; if you, by a hundred kindnesses, cover up their faults, and rest under blame rather than expose them; and if in all your relations with them you are generous, and thoughtful of their welfare, they will soon learn to respect you. And they will say to each other of you, "Something has come over him. He is better than he was before." Why do they think that you are better than you were before? Because in so many ways you send out the pointed flame of sympathy and kindness, and are burning the dross out of their thoughts, and are making yourself agreeable to them, not by pandering to their wickednesses, but by doing good to them. You do not necessarily do good to them by instruction; but you do them good through taste; you do them good through your power of amusement; you do them good in any way in which you can do good to them.

A person who has been endowed with richness of musical talent has a wonderful power of doing good. When persons are converted to the Lord, sometimes they put away all their music; they put away the festive dance; they put away the gay entertainment. Nay, nay; keep them; but when you sing, it is a Christian heart that is merry. What if it be a carol, or love-song, or world-song? If your heart has seen Jesus, and you know the power of the world to come, sing it. Sing, not for your own sake, but for the sake of others. It is a coin that will pass current; it will draw men to you; and they will find that you are not shut off from them. Participate in amusement, but not in mere gayety, as if that were all. The moment the heart is touched by the Spirit of God, the Comforter, the Enlightener, it gives a different character to everything that you do.

My second mother (the only one that I knew) was the stateliest, and the devoutest, and the most crystalline, and the loftiest of women. She was undemonstrative in affection; but she was my very ideal of propriety, and elegance, and perfection, and taste. And yet I remember that one day when my father was playing on the violin (it happened to be an old melody that she was familiar with) in a neighboring room, and we were sitting in the dining-room, she came out on the floor (for she had been a belle, and had often tripped the light fantastic toe) and lifted her hands gracefully, and commenced dancing around the room. I had never seen such a thing in



that house before ! I looked on with astonishment ! The color came to my cheeks, and the light to my eyes ! And I have thought that if my mother had danced a little oftener, and said the catechism a little less often, it would have been a thousand times better for me.

If you have gifts, whatever they are, of beauty, consecrate them. If you have the gift of art, consecrate it. If you have the gift of eloquence, consecrate it: If you have the gift of poetry, consecrate it. If you have the gift of emotion, consecrate it. If you have any gift, whatever it is, make sure that you root it in genuine sympathy, and that you exercise it. With a whole heaven before you, child of God, child of eternity, brother of the whole race, now sing ; now go forth in your gayety. There is a moral meaning to it that will redeem it from all possibility of perversion. It has a meaning that will annihilate the distance which there is between your heart and the hearts of other people. It will draw people to you. You want people baptized in the fountain of your sympathy and love. That which is wanted above everything else, is to draw men to your heart.

When Christ went to the miserable, he went *to* them ; and when he laid his hand on them, he laid it *on* them. He did not hold himself aloof from them. He touched them with his own person, with his own body, as much as to say, " You and I are one." And when we would do good to men, we must give them more of ourselves than mere formulated words can convey. The heart must somehow or other take hold of men. And I would say to the person who is brought into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, If God has endowed you with gifts, consecrate them to the work of common benevolence. Do not think of maiming them. Do not disbranch yourself, but consecrate everything you have. You have much to work with ; and by the voice, by the eye, by the hand, by the soul, by everything, make men about you more happy. Make yourself more necessary to their happiness. And that will give you an opportunity to do them good spiritually ; for by and by they will ask you for that which, if you were to intrude it upon them in the first instance, they would not receive.

So, while there is a great deal of general instruction to be given in Sabbath-schools, and Bible classes, and religious meetings, let no man think that these are exclusively the ways in which a man is to do good. He is to do good *as he has opportunity*, according to his faculties. Love men, and love them enough ; seek *their* happiness and welfare, and seek it long enough ; make yourself felt by them personally and beneficially—that is your business.

And here I may say, In carrying out this work beware, while you do not neglect home, that you do not confine the disclosure of yourself to your own household. It is right for a bird to make herself a nest, and put the finest moss and softest feathers in that nest, and it is right that she should sit upon it. It is right that she should have but one chamber—for bird never builds for more than themselves and their own. But they are only birds and do not know any better. It is for us to build a broad nest. To build it so that nobody can get into it but ourselves, to line it with our own prosperity, and to selfishly fill it with everything that is sweet and soft—that is not right.

I think that a man's house ought to be a magazine of kindness. Its windows ought to send out light. I like, when I go by a house at night, to see the window-shutters open so that the light shines forth from inside. Though I dislike to have my own open, yet I think how many persons would be made happier if in passing through the streets they saw the light blazing out of the houses. There are a thousand such little things by which others may be made happy.

A person says, "I will put this clump of flowers under the parlor window." No, no; put them by the gate. A thousand will see them there, where one would see them in that other place. A person says, "I will put this plant back where nobody can reach it." Well, do; but put two close to the fence, where they can be reached. I like to see little hands go through the pickets and pluck off flowers. And if you say, "That is stealing," then let it be understood through all the neighborhood that it is not stealing. There are some who seem to have such a sense of property that if they had a hundred magnolia trees in full blossom on their premises, they would want the wind to blow from the north and south and east and west, so that all the fragrance would come into their own house; whereas the true spirit would be a desire that a thousand others should be blessed by these bounties as well as themselves.

I think that it is generally the spirit of horticulture. If a man has fine fruit, he is crazy to give it away, and he runs all over the neighborhood to find somebody to enjoy it with him. If a man has an abundance of choice flowers, he is not stingy with them. He enjoys them by giving them away. The great trouble in planting largely is that you have not folks enough to give your flowers to.

You say, "That is a natural feeling." Well, what is a religious feeling but a natural feeling raised up and spiritualized and sanctified?

I would have your homes made, not less, but more; but in making



them engines of happiness, see that other people participate in that happiness as well as you. Make your dwelling beautiful; but not for your own eyes alone. Fill it sumptuously, if you have the grace to rightly use that sumptuousity. Let the feet of the poor step on your plushy carpet. Let their eyes behold the rich furniture of your apartments. Would it make their home less to them? Not necessarily. If you take a child by the hand—you, whose name is great in the town; you, who tower up in power above all your neighbors; if you lay your hand on his head, and call him "Sonny;" if you bring him into your house; if you go to the cupboard and take out the unfamiliar cake, or what not, that children so much like (for the senses must be appealed to in childhood before the spirit can be reached; and by feeding the mouth of a child you come to his affections and feelings); if you show him your rooms, and give him something in his pocket to carry home and show his aunt or sister, do you suppose that child ever thinks you are *stuck up*, or looks on you with an unkindly eye? When he comes into the neighborhood again, and your house dawns upon him, he remembers, the moment he sees it, how happy you made him there. And that house of yours can be made to bless generation after generation.

God be thanked for these great village mansions out of which comes so much food for the hungry; out of which comes so much raiment for the naked; out of which come so many watchers for the sick; out of which come so many genial advisers for those who are in circumstances of embarrassment; out of which comes so much bounty to those around about them that the whole community come to feel an ownership in them. Do you suppose that wealth can ever be perverted by ministering to the comfort of the neighborhood where it exists?

*As you have opportunity, do good to all men.* Build your house large; furnish it richly; but it is to be consecrated to making people happy. Let your doors be wide; let them turn on their hinges without squeaking; let people come in as the air comes; let your hospitality be shown freely to one and another. So living, you cannot be too royal.

Oh! what an artist God is! And if he makes his foot-stool as beautiful as the earth is made, how does he make his throne? If he covers his heavens with these evanescent frescoes; if he paints these panoramas which we see moving through the summer sky; if he creates such statuary as we see everywhere exhibited in winter, what, think you, is the decoration of his house where his children come home to dwell with him forever?

Do not be afraid to build fine houses; and do not be afraid to

spend large sums of money in their decoration ; but remember that these houses are not for you alone, but for everybody.

So much for home ; and in going forth from it, I call your attention to the significant feature of religion as you will find it set forth in the epistles as well as the life of Christ, if you look them through—its *gentlemanliness*. I know of no other word that will express the idea. Not only were the apostles themselves—and Paul conspicuously—men of the utmost courtesy, in the highest sense of the word, but there is not a vulgarizing maxim in the New Testament. There is not one that looks toward vulgarity. There is not one that the most polished and noble soul does not feel to be the expression of its highest want. “Mind not high things,” said Paul, “but condescend to men of low estate.”

Now, a true Christian man, a real gentleman, while he speaks to his neighbor's child, and to his natural companions, will never let any one pass that he has access to, without courtesy—and more, as men need more.

Here is a plain man ; and a kindness to him is a kindness as much as it would be to your heart-neighbor whom affection leads you to bestow more care upon than upon others. Courtesy in life should be such that they shall have most kindness who need most ; but kindness is so distributed in society that those who need the most have the least.

What makes class so hateful, is that men shut themselves up in superiority ; that when men, having wealth, have leisure, they take that leisure and separate themselves from other men, thus building up a wall of partition between themselves and others. There is more sectarianism outside of the church than in it. There is a widespread sectarianism among men who classify themselves without thought of others. But when men who are superior hold themselves in the spirit of the Gospel, which is, that *the greatest is he that serves the most*, and that *the strong are God's natural protectors of the weak*, then all opposition and abuse from the community is disarmed. Therefore, if you see a plain man, speak to him. He is not of your sort ; he does not follow your congenial avocation ; your hands are white and his are red ; yours are delicate and his are rude ; but it is not the hand that you are saluting : it is the heart, for which Christ died. So speak kindly to him. “But,” you say, “do you suppose I'm going to put myself on a level with a low-bred boy ?” No, make yourself superior to him. Speak to him more kindly than any other man can. Be more sympathetic toward him than any other man can be. That is true aristocracy—the aristocracy of the heart.

The more God has blessed you, the more you need to go down.

When we are prospered, we tend to drift away from the great heart of humanity ; we tend to get further and further from the lower range of sympathy , and we need to touch the ground again. It is necessary for a man's health that he should feel mother-earth every day. Dust you are, dust you came from, dust you will return to ; and there is a lesson in dirt, if men will only choose the right kind, and use it in the right way.

Speak, then, to the man that takes ashes out of your house. Make him feel that somebody thinks of him, and that that somebody is you. And do not forget your seamstress, your servants, your driver. And do not think of them by these names. Do not think of people by the service-badge that they wear. The man that you call your driver, is not your driver : he is your brother-man. Driving is his function ; but he is not a driver. We come to think of men by outside names, and not by inside substance and inside feeling. But this ought not to be so. And in proportion as men are poorer and obscurer than you are, be more particular to sympathize with them, and to notice them.

I shall never forget a lesson that I received when walking down Pierrepont street one day. When this church was being built, I became acquainted with one of the carpenters—a plain man—who worked upon it ; and I had many chats with him afterward. That day, being a Christian, (sometimes I am not one), when I met him, as he came down the street, I stopped and spoke to him, and shook hands with him. And giving me, as I noticed, a peculiar look, and keeping hold of my hand, he said, “ Now, sir, you do not know how much good this does me.” “ What ? ” said I. “ Well, your speaking to me, and shaking hands with me.” Said he, “ I shall go home to-night, and say to my wife, ‘ I met Mr. Beecher to-day.’ ‘ Ah ! ’ she will say, ‘ What did he say ? ’ and the children will look up, too. And I will tell them, ‘ He stopped and shook hands with me, and asked if I was getting along well.’ And they will talk about that for a week. You folks that live up here—” [In Pierrepont street they are all Christians, but they are not always as Christian as they might be]—“ you folks that live up here [glancing around] have no idea how much good it does a plain man to be noticed, and to be made to feel that he is not a nobody.”

I owe that man a good many sermons for that sermon which he preached to me.

Now, when you go over to New York, there is the ticket-man at the gate. He is your brother. And there is the engineer down in the bowels of the hold, if you see him. And there is the pilot. Nobody speaks to those pilots. In storm and in calm, they hold in



their hands the safety and the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children; and they do it so skillfully, and so kindly, and so well, that you do not even think that they do it. And when I think of the vast amount of carriage of human freight which there is on our thoroughfares, instead of cursing the pilots and engineers for the occasional accidents which happen, I thank God that we have men who, in the main, are so able, so faithful, and so careful of this precious treasure which is committed to their trust. Is there a man in a cooper's-shop, in a tin-shop, or at an anvil, that is working for you? and do you think of him as you ought? Do you say that he gets his money? That does not pay him. No man is paid for service faithfully performed for you until you have coined something out of your heart to pay him with. Money does not reward service.

This spirit of real brotherhood should not confine itself to the household. It should go out from the family on to the street, and through all the avenues and vocations of life.

And do not forget little children. Of course children are loved in the families where they belong; and of course all sweet children on the street are liked. Who ever saw a doll-dressed child, with one of those bewitching little red sacques or hoods on, that did not want to catch it up and kiss it? But then, there are a great many children that are dressed raggedly. There are a great many children with bad eyes. There are a great many children that do not keep their faces clean. I do not admire the dirt, but they are *children*; and they need that somebody should make them feel self-respect; and if you snub them, if you curse them, who will take care of them? Their parents at home evidently do not do it, or are unable to do it. Be kind to children; and be kind to them in proportion as they are needy. If you take ragamuffins into your house; if on New Year's Day you make extra preparation, and let it be known, and the street boys all find out that there is a basket of oranges waiting for them, and they come, and you give them a warm welcome, you preach to them such a sermon as you cannot preach to them in any other way. They are not able to understand anything else so well as that. They will make you trouble; they will offend your taste; they will soil your carpets; they will do many things which your children would not do in your neighbor's house; but it is the misfortune of the ignorant that they do not know how to behave; and somebody must teach them. And while you speak to all a kind word, especially speak to those that need speaking to most.

I frequently see an irruption from Furman street on to Columbia Heights. We, you know, live on *Columbia Heights*; and what

business have these rough, stamping boys to invade aristocracy? They come up, ten, twelve of them at a time, and sweep the street of all the puny children that live there. And often they come with yells, and halloos, and rattling kettles, and all manner of disturbances. And we look up and down the street, and say, "Where is the policeman?"—for it is sometimes necessary to maintain order by appealing to the officers of the law. And yet, I say to myself, "I wish some of those boys were mine. What a physique! That head has substance in it! That head ought to go to Congress—I mean, to the Senate!" And as I look at them, I see a future in them. I see power in them. I see much to admire, as well as some things to deprecate, in them. And really, my heart turns toward the boys.

I would that this were the case more. I would that I were not so much dependent on moods. I would that my feelings did not depend so much upon sunshiny days and gloomy days. I would that I were not so much subject to introversion. I would that I were not so much absorbed by my occupation. But we are all infirm in these things. And yet, if we have this idea of brotherhood, and are seeking to carry it out, it is not a little.

Only one thing more—for I have protracted my remarks far beyond what I meant to. I wish that, in being gathered into the church of Christ here, you would all, old and young, remember that you are not coming among us as so many soldiers to be regimented and drilled into formal propriety. I cannot endure the thought that Christ's children should be less free, less joyful, less elastic, and less versatile, than anybody else. I want a Christian to be one that at heart is truly upright; but, more than this, I want that he should be one that shall go on with more amplitude of life, with more gayety, with more cheerfulness, with more happiness-producing power than anybody else in the community. I want that he should be one that shall put men to shame by well-doing. But, at the same time, let the eye blossom; let the mouth blossom; let the whole life be as blossoms and clusters that men shall take from you. I call you to a Christian life not merely to save your souls—though that is of transcendent interest, and though that should be regarded by a man as of most serious consideration, underlying the incontrovertible object of religion. I call you to a Christian life, not because God has a right to your services—though that is transcendent over all other motives, and should be more fruitful than any other. I call you to a Christian life for the sake of your fellow-men; that you may bear to them that which life needs so much—more gentleness, more ease in being entreated, more sweetness in love, more kindness in benevolence, more generosity, more condescension, more attention:

to those that have no friends, and are out of the way. I call you to manifest the Spirit of Christ on the right, and on the left, and under all circumstances, so that men who see you shall say, "I know not whether that man is a Christian or not, but I know that he not only makes me better, but makes me happier." Make men so much happier that that they will long to be better, and long to be able to make others happier.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

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### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Eternal God! thou art lifted above all the infirmities of time. Thou art not overcome with weariness; and thy strength never fails. Neither art thou tempted of evil. Thou dwellest far above all imperfections, and all shadow of turning; and in thine own infinite self thou art complete, and thou hast no need of counselors, and thou needest none to strengthen thine hand. Thou abidest forever. We perish before the moth; we are full of weakness; we are most ignorant, and know, often, least when we think that we know the most. What time thou turnest thine hand we perish. In thee we live, and move, and have our being, though we vaunt our own knowledge, our own skill, and our own preservative care. O Lord! look down with compassion upon thy creatures, filled with infirmities and with transgression. We have broken forth into sin out of infirmities. And we pray that thou wilt pardon all the wickedness of our hearts, and all the evil of our lives, and lift us up by thy strength into purity and knowledge, and quicken us in all fervor of goodness, that we may, all the days of our lives, live with open face toward the light of God, unrebuked and unreprouable.

We pray, O Lord! that thou wilt grant unto every one, according to his need, that grace which shall be efficacious to succor those that are in peril, to comfort those that are in grief, and to rebuke those that are wandering away selfishly from thee. Remind those that are breaking their covenant vows with thee. Grant, we pray thee, the visitation of thy comforting Spirit to all that are sad and cast down, by reason of thy dealings with them, on account of their own selfishness and imperfections and sins. And we pray O Lord! that, as a mother comforteth her child, thou wilt comfort those that sit in dreariness and are disconsolate. For thou knowest the heart. Thou hast the secret of comfort with thyself. Eternally joyful, and joy-bearing, thou seest how pain that ministers sharply fulfills thy will and mission. And we pray thee that pain may have its speedy work and accomplishment, and that out of suffering may come patience, and gentleness, and resignation, and sympathy, and kindness, and love. And we pray that thou wilt work in the hearts of all thy people, cleansing them from the defilement of the flesh, from the selfishness of life, from the strifes and passions that betide us, and prepare them for that nobler manhood, that better residence among the saints in heaven.

We pray that thou wilt draw near to every one in thy presence, and grant that the blessing of thy heart and thy spirit may be upon all. Hear the voice of those that would utter promises to thee. Hear those that re-



joice before thee, and would give thanks and speak thy praise. Grant thy blessings to those who are not here, but who are full of gratitude for thy preserving and restoring mercies. Hear those that desire this morning to praise thee in the great congregation, long absent and restored at last. Grant unto them, we beseech of thee, secretly, and in their very heart, a sense of thy presence, and a consciousness that thou dost receive their offer.

Be near to those that are in discouragement, and may they see the light of hope, and may they not despond. Though great may be their adversaries, and though great may be their sense of imperfection, may they yet have ministered to them such a sense of divine grace and providential care that they shall be able to rise above themselves as into the very presence and comfort of their Redeemer.

And we pray, O Lord! that thou wouldst be with those who would be here, and who sit in solitude with sad thoughts, or overburdened with care, or with suffering in sickness, or homesick and far away. And not only be with them, but, since to thee there is neither time nor space, since to thee all things are present and near, grant that the mercies that are descending upon us may widen, and may fall upon *all* whom we would have with us.

We pray, O Lord! that thy blessing may come this day unto thy churches. Let us not have thy presence, and thy power, and the joy of thy salvation, and others be unwet with the divine dew. Everywhere strengthen thy servants to speak thy word. Everywhere kindle in the hearts of thy people joyful worship.

And we pray not alone for the spread of the knowledge of Christ, but for the power of Christian love and faith. We beseech of thee that the times past may be sufficient. Grant that more and more, as the day approaches, we may see the tokens of thy coming for the emancipation of the world. Lift up the darkened nations. Pour twilight upon those that sit in the region and shadow of death. May those that preach the cross of Christ go forth in increasing companies, with more and more faith, and more and more success.

We pray that all the great events which are occurring, that all the discoveries which are being made in science, that all the efforts which are being put forth for the improvement and the welfare of mankind, may be sanctified by thy Spirit. And grant that we may not alone grow in outward estate, and in things material, but that we may become finer, and sweeter, and truer, and more just, and more noble.

And we pray that thou wilt fulfill all thy promises which respect thy Church, and which respect this whole world. And grant that the weary waiting of ages may at last cease, and that we may see the door of fulfillment standing wide open, and behold the heralds and angels coming forth to their rejoicing work of consummation.

Now, Lord, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the services of this day. May all those that teach in Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes be able to teach out of their own hearts. May they have the spirit of God resting upon them. May all those that go forth to make known the Gospel to the wanderers, and to those that are the children of misfortune, and to those that are imprisoned, and to all that are without God and without hope in the world, go with the double Spirit of the Master; and grant that they may see of the fruit of their labor and not be discouraged.

And we pray for the elevation of morals in our cities. We pray for more wise laws, and for incorrupt magistrates. We pray that this whole nation, so signally blessed of God, may study justice more. Let not equity perish from our midst. More and more may men rise to nobler motives and to

purser lives. And grant that civilization may spread from this land to all the lands that sit in darkness. And have pity upon those who are in struggle and in suffering from the mighty waves of adversity that beat over them. And in due season raise them up, and restore them to prosperity and to greater wisdom than before. And we pray that thy kingdom may come, and that thy will may be done on earth as in heaven.

We ask these favors in the name of the Beloved, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, wilt thou add thy blessing to the word spoken. Forgive us all our sins. Heal us of our weaknesses. Strengthen in us things that are right and just and true. Open in us a fountain of pity. Open in us a perennial fountain of benevolence and sympathy and good-will. And we pray that we may abound in these things so that the light of our life may be the joy of the unfortunate. May we be the comforters of the poor and needy, and so live as benefactors of men, that we shall be, at the last, thought meet to enter into the sympathy of the just made perfect in heaven. And unto thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

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
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